



INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF TEXAS

March 15th, 2021

Dear Chairman Deshotel,

I am writing you today in strong support of HB 1348 as I believe it is one of the most important pieces of legislation in support of parent choice in education since the Texas Legislature passed the first legislation to create charter schools in 1995.

Charter schools were a creation of the Texas Legislature and signed into law by Governor Bush. It should be settled as the law of the land but as you know it is not and this is why HB 1348 is so critically important.

What has happened since then is an unhealthy alliance between the interests of independent school districts and city government against the state law and more importantly against the parents right to choose where to send their own children and for the parent to be the primary decision maker in the education of their children.

I have served 20 years in the United States Marine Corps as an Infantry Officer and one of the Marine Corps' sacred values is integrity and I have been sorely disappointed in my fellow educators in the level of misinformation that has been used against charters and claimed as truth that misleads and misinforms local governments to veto and block charters from offering a different educational opportunity for parents.

One of the biggest red herrings used against charters is that they cost tax payers more money as they want to only talk about the state's share of taxes sent to schools. As recent as last week, a superintendent of a large school district in the DFW area wrote a false letter arguing against ILTexas expansion and in it he states money when in fact if the taxpayers knew how much more of their tax money is being spent by large districts I think they would revolt! Per the Texas Education Agency website at <http://www.txschools.gov> ILTexas received \$ 10,424 per student whereas the large district that was arguing against ILTexas receives \$11,352 per student a difference of \$928. That would mean that large district would receive an additional \$19,209,000 taxpayer dollars to educate the 20,700 students that ILTexas currently serves. Said another way, let's save the Texas taxpayers their hard earned money and since charters "get more money" let's put all ISDs funded at total taxpayer level of \$10,424 which in that large district would save the tax payers \$76,749,312 million dollars (82,704 students x \$928).

The misinformation doesn't stop there. His letter to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and members of the Texas Senate and Texas House also claims:

1. that ILTexas only has 5.9% gifted and talented students while his district has 12.7% yet what he doesn't let you know is that 100% of the ILTexas students (regardless of GT designation) are in fact in a GT program – TEA recognizes the Dual Language program as a GT program. Additionally 100% of all ILTexas students are also learning Chinese.
2. That ILTexas doesn't budget anything for student services when in fact at ILTexas we have counselors at K-2, 3-5,6-8 and high school and special college advisors at



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- high school when have gotten our students into the top universities in the world and many with full scholarship. Additionally, at ILTexas we provide nurses at every campus and we provide peace officers at every campus (not to discipline students) in order to ensure that every child and staff member is safe from external threats – shooters.
3. States that ILTexas doesn't serve students with major disciplinary issues and while that is a half truth part of the reason is that charters do not have the authority to have "District Alternative Education Placement" schools. As a Marine Infantry Officer, I ask you to please allow charters to have alternative disciplinary schools in their charters and this red herring will go away as well.
 4. States that ILTexas only serves 6.1% special education needs students while his district serves 9.9%. As a charter, I can not order special education students and their families to apply. The parents self select but when they win the lottery and are admitted into ILTexas we serve them with 100% of every penny we get from the state and the federal government. I would put our Special Education Department up against any in the state and in fact I volunteered ILTexas to be one of the first COHORT to be inspected by the Texas Education Agency. They were very impressed and members of their team who had special education students asked when were we coming to Austin. But in order to come to Austin, we have to fight the district and the city because superintendents are spreading misinformation and half-truths to keep parent choice out.

Chairman Deshotel and members of the committee, I strongly encourage you to quickly pass this bill in order to preserve the authority of the Texas Government and more importantly to preserve and protect the parents rights to chose for themselves where they want their children to be educated.

I am available to answer any questions and to testify in any forum and as always you and any member are always welcome to safely tour any of our 32 campuses throughout Texas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ed Conger".

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